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October 5, 2011

The Honorable Cynthia Stone Creem
Senate Chair - Joint Committee on the Judiciary
State House, Room 405
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Eugene L. O'Flaherty
House Chair - Joint Committee on the Judiciary
State House, Room 136
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S.B. 640, *An Act to Protect and Enhance the Rights of Child and Adult Victims and Witnesses of Crime*

Dear Chairwoman Creem and Chairman O'Flaherty:

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 640, *An Act to Protect and Enhance the Rights of Child and Adult Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, which clarifies and enhances the existing Victims' Bill of Rights included in Chapter 258B of the General Laws. The provisions outlined in this legislation ensure that all victims of crime in the Commonwealth will uniformly receive enhanced information and support, and also will allow for best practices to be consistently offered to victims impacted by crime.

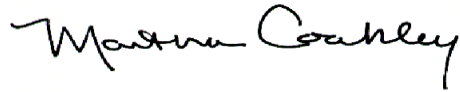
Senate Bill 640 updates important existing provisions of Chapter 258B that would further safeguard the rights of victims and witnesses and also would bring the bill up-to-date with current advocacy practices. For instance, the bill ensures that victims who are members of vulnerable populations, such as children and adults with certain disabilities, are allowed a support person in the courtroom during their testimony. These victims will also be provided with an orientation to the courtroom and its processes before they testify to give them a greater sense of the feel of the courtroom prior to testifying. These provisions are critical to minimize the possibility of a victim being re-traumatized during the legal process. As a former prosecutor of child abuse cases, I am certain that these steps ensure the fair administration of justice by creating an environment where witnesses' can testify and recollect information correctly.

In addition, the legislation would also ensure that families of homicide victims whose cases remain unsolved, and non-English speaking victims and witnesses, are aware of and afforded their rights. Such information about the process and the support available to victims

and witnesses is critical to allow them to navigate the legal process and rebuild their lives.

This legislation will ensure that all victims are afforded the support they so desperately need at, what is for some, such a difficult time in their lives. As such, I urge you to give S.B. 640 a favorable recommendation. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martha Coakley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martha Coakley

Cc: The Honorable Frederick E. Berry, Senate Majority Leader